



The Compassionate Friends

**Central Indiana Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies**

March 2026 Newsletter

Compassionate Friends (TCF) is a non-profit, self-help organization that provides comfort, hope, and support for bereaved parents, grandparents, and siblings. We cordially invite you to attend our meetings.

Southside Meeting is the 1st

Wed. of each month @ 6:30 pm
New Hope Church
5307 W. Fairview Road
Greenwood, IN

Facilitator: Angie Groover
angie.groover@tcfcentralindiana.org
(317) 777 4258

Upcoming Meetings:

Mar. 4th & Apr. 1st

Northside Meeting is the 3rd

Tues. of each month @ 6:30 pm
Epworth United Methodist
6450 Allisonville Road
Indianapolis, IN

Facilitator: Melanie Stewart
melanie.stewart@tcfcentralindiana.org

Upcoming Meetings:

Mar. 17th & Apr. 21st

CENTRAL INDIANA TCF CHAPTER

Chapter Leader: April Leo
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Treasurer: April Leo
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Webmaster: Larry Gardner
larry.gardner@tcfcentralindiana.org

Secretary: April Leo
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Our conference is a place for bereaved families to find community and hope, while learning and sharing with others. Lifelong friendships are often made at the conference through meeting others who truly understand the painful loss of a child, sibling, or grandchild. This eagerly anticipated event will take place in Baltimore, Maryland, during the weekend of July 2-5, 2026.

WAYS TO DEAL WITH “PARENTAL GRIEF” OPENLY

Below, you'll find some ideas that are more closely related to parental grief after the death and loss of a child. The resolution of parental grief may seem like an overwhelming task, but it is possible. It's important to be both realistic and optimistic — you will never get over the death and loss of your child. But you will survive it, even as you are changed by it. You will never forget your child or his or her death. As you go through each holiday, each season, each happy and sad occasion that may trigger another wave of grief, you will gain greater strength and better tools for coping with the pain.

Don't hide from your guilt: After the death and loss of a child you have feelings of guilt — which are common but not always present — confront and admit them. Examine the reality of how your child died and your actual intentions and actions at the time. You may see your actions or reactions in a more positive light. Forgive yourself for being imperfect — you did and continue to do the best that you can.

Accept happiness: After the death and loss of a child one of the major hurdle's parents experience in their return to the world of the living is their inability to accept pleasure — or acknowledging that it even exists. But happiness or enjoyment is one of the most important survival tools, even if for just a moment in your grief. It's okay to laugh in the midst of tears, to smile at someone or something. You might feel that your laughter betrays your child's memory, but you need to know you are not abandoning your grieving by enjoying yourself. The only way to survive bereavement is to step away from it occasionally.

Take small steps: After the death and loss of a child it is important to break down the future into small increments, an hour or a day, and deal only with one portion at a time. Focus on tasks — feed the cat, do the laundry. These little bits of normalcy and focusing on the moment at hand will make grief more bearable.

Remember the positive: Focus on the positive events and experiences in the relationship you had with your child. At some point, consider making a journal of all the details you want to remember about your child's life. Review your family photographs and include some in your book. You may not feel ready to do this right away or you may take great comfort doing this in the early days — each person is individual in his or her needs.

Let others know your needs: After the death and loss of a child many people want to be supportive but are at a loss for what to do — they are unable to process this loss or know exactly what to say. Bereaved parents may have to be the ones to take the first step in reaching out to others. Let friends and family know your needs, and don't be afraid to ask for help. If you're afraid of running into someone who might say something about your child, ask a friend to do some shopping for you. Others could help you deal with daily tasks. Maybe you'd like someone to be available to listen to you or be around to ease your loneliness. Only you know what you need.

Surviving the death and loss of a child takes a dedication to life. As a parent, you gave birth to life as a promise to the future. Now you must make a new commitment to living, as hard or impossible as it may seem right now. You will survive this; however, the experience may change you.

What I Wish Other People Understood About Losing a Child

Remember our children with us.

The loss of children is a pain all bereaved parents share, and it is a degree of suffering that is impossible to grasp without experiencing it firsthand. Often, when we know someone else is experiencing grief, our discomfort keeps us from approaching it head-on. But we want the world to remember our child or children, no matter how young or old our child was.

If you see something that reminds you of my child, tell me. If you are reminded at the holidays or on his birthday that I am missing my son, please tell me you remember him. And when I speak his name or relive memories, relive them with me; don't shrink away. If you never met my son, don't be afraid to ask about him. One of my greatest joys is talking about him.

Accept that you can't "fix" us.

An out-of-order death such as child loss breaks a person (especially a parent) in a way that is not fixable or solvable. We will learn to pick up the pieces and move forward, but our lives will never be the same. Every grieving parent must find a way to continue to live with loss, and it's a solitary journey. We appreciate your support and hope you can be patient with us as we find our way. Please: Don't tell us it's time to get back to life, that's it's been long enough, or that time heals all wounds. We welcome your support and love, and we know sometimes it's hard to watch, but our sense of brokenness isn't going to go away. It is something to observe, recognize, accept.

Know that there are at least two days a year we need a timeout.

We still count birthdays and fantasize about what our child would be like if he or she were still living. Birthdays are especially hard for us. Our hearts ache to celebrate our child's arrival into this world, but we are left becoming intensely aware of the hole in our hearts instead. Some parents create rituals or have parties while others prefer solitude. Either way, we are likely going to need time to process the marking of another year without our child. Then there's the anniversary of the date our child became an angel. This is a remarkable process similar to a parent of a newborn, first counting the days, then months, then the one-year anniversary, marking the time on the other side of that crevasse in our lives. No matter how many years go by, the anniversary date of when our child died brings back deeply emotional memories and painful feelings (particularly if there is trauma associated with the child's death). The days leading up to that day can feel like impending doom or like it's hard to breathe. We may or may not share with you what's happening. This is where the process of remembrance will help. If you have heard me speak of my child or supported me in remembering him or her, you will be able to put the pieces together and know when these tough days are approaching.

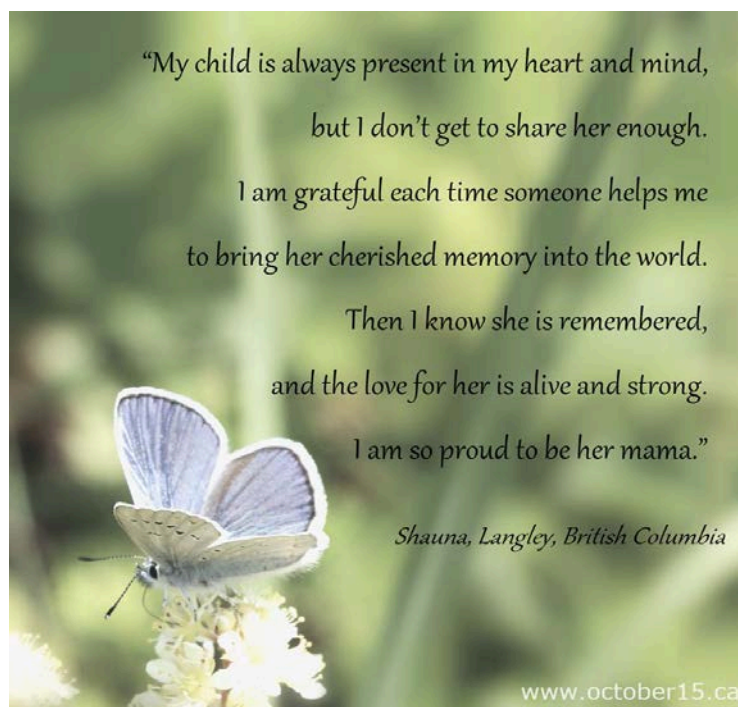
Realize that we struggle every day with happiness.

It's an ongoing battle to balance the pain and guilt of outliving your child with the desire to live in a way that honors them and their time on this earth. I remember going on a family cruise 18 months after Brandon died. On the first day, I stood at the back of the ship and bawled that I wasn't sharing this experience with him. Then I had to steady myself and recognize that I was also creating memories with my surviving sons and enjoy the time with them in the present moment. As bereaved parents, we are constantly balancing holding grief in one hand and a happy life after loss in the other. You might observe this when you are with us at a wedding, graduation, or other milestone celebration. Don't walk away—witness it with us and be part of our process.

Accept the fact that our loss might make you uncomfortable.

Our loss is unnatural, out of order; it challenges your sense of safety. You may not know what to say or do, and you're afraid you might make us lose it. We've learned all of this as part of what we're learning about grief. We will never forget our child. And, in fact, our loss is always right under the surface of other emotions, even happiness. We would rather lose it because you spoke his/her name and remembered our child than try and shield ourselves from the pain and live in denial. Grief is the pendulum swing of love. The stronger and deeper the love, the more grief will be created on the other side. Consider it a sacred opportunity to stand shoulder to shoulder with someone who has endured one of life's most frightening events. Rise up with us.

By Paula Stephens
www.mindbodygreen.com





<u>Child's Name</u>	<u>Birthdate</u>	<u>Angel Date</u>
Shelby Wimmenauer	3-Mar	4-Nov
Braden Reynolds	4-Mar	4-Mar
Michael Faust	4-Mar	26-Jul
Grace Hartman	6-Mar	9-Mar
Linsey Parley	8-Mar	26-Nov
James (JC) Freed	9-Mar	5-Mar
Rachael Valentine	9-Mar	31-Jan
Lori Huter Hardcastle	10-Mar	19-Aug
Jason Sipher	11-Mar	9-Jan
Jean Ann Ervin Gruber	13-Mar	9-Jun
London Hood	13-Mar	28-Oct
Rylie Surack	13-Mar	13-May
Karlee Mason	14-Mar	28-Nov
Aaron Miller	15-Mar	29-Nov
Alex Douglas Dampf	15-Mar	23-Dec
Ava Parker	15-Mar	9-Jan
Troy McElfresh	17-Mar	25-Apr
Anthony J Elder	18-Mar	27-Jul
Christopher "Cody" Pea	18-Mar	28-Jul
Kelsey Devine	19-Mar	9-Nov
Danielle Crum	20-Mar	8-Jan
Isaac Schoder	21-Mar	21-Mar
Tanner Peckenpaugh	22-Mar	17-Nov
Benjamin Greer	23-Mar	23-Oct
Benjamin Lowry	23-Mar	6-Jun
Ella Rhodes	23-Mar	24-Oct
Matthew Krenzke	24-Mar	9-Sep
Andres Ichiro Garcia Hoshiko	25-Mar	1-Nov
Anthony Pahl	25-Mar	4-Jun
Noah Artrip	25-Mar	11-Mar
Erich Ennen	27-Mar	7-Apr
Jordan Domonique Bright	27-Mar	29-Oct
Amy Michaloski	28-Mar	12-Mar
Mark Bolstridge	30-Mar	25-Feb
Jonathon Kalin	31-Mar	3-Apr



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The Compassionate Friends Credo

We need not walk alone. We are Compassionate Friends. We reach out to each other with love, with understanding and with hope. The children we mourn have died at all ages and from many different causes, but our love for them unites us. Your pain becomes my pain just as your hope becomes my hope. We come together from all walks of life, from many different circumstances. We are a unique family because we represent many races, creeds and relationships. We are young, and we are old. Some of us are far along in our grief, but others still feel grief so fresh and so intensely painful that we feel helpless and see no hope. Some of us have found our faith to be a source of strength, while some of us are struggling to find answers. Some of us are angry, filled with guilt or in deep depression, while others radiate an inner peace. But whatever pain we bring to the gathering of The Compassionate Friends, it is pain we will share, just as we share with each other our love for our children who have died. We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves, but we are committed to building that future together. We reach out to each other in love to share the pain as well as the joy, share the anger as well as the peace, share the faith as well as the doubts and help each other to grieve as well as to grow.

We Need Not Walk Alone – We Are The Compassionate Friends.

We welcome submissions for the newsletter from any of our members. If you have a poem or some other writing that has helped you, or just some helpful insights of your own, submit them to april.leo@tcfcentralindiana.org. Please be sure to include the author's name, whether it's someone else or yourself.

Love gifts are much appreciated.
You can mail them to our
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